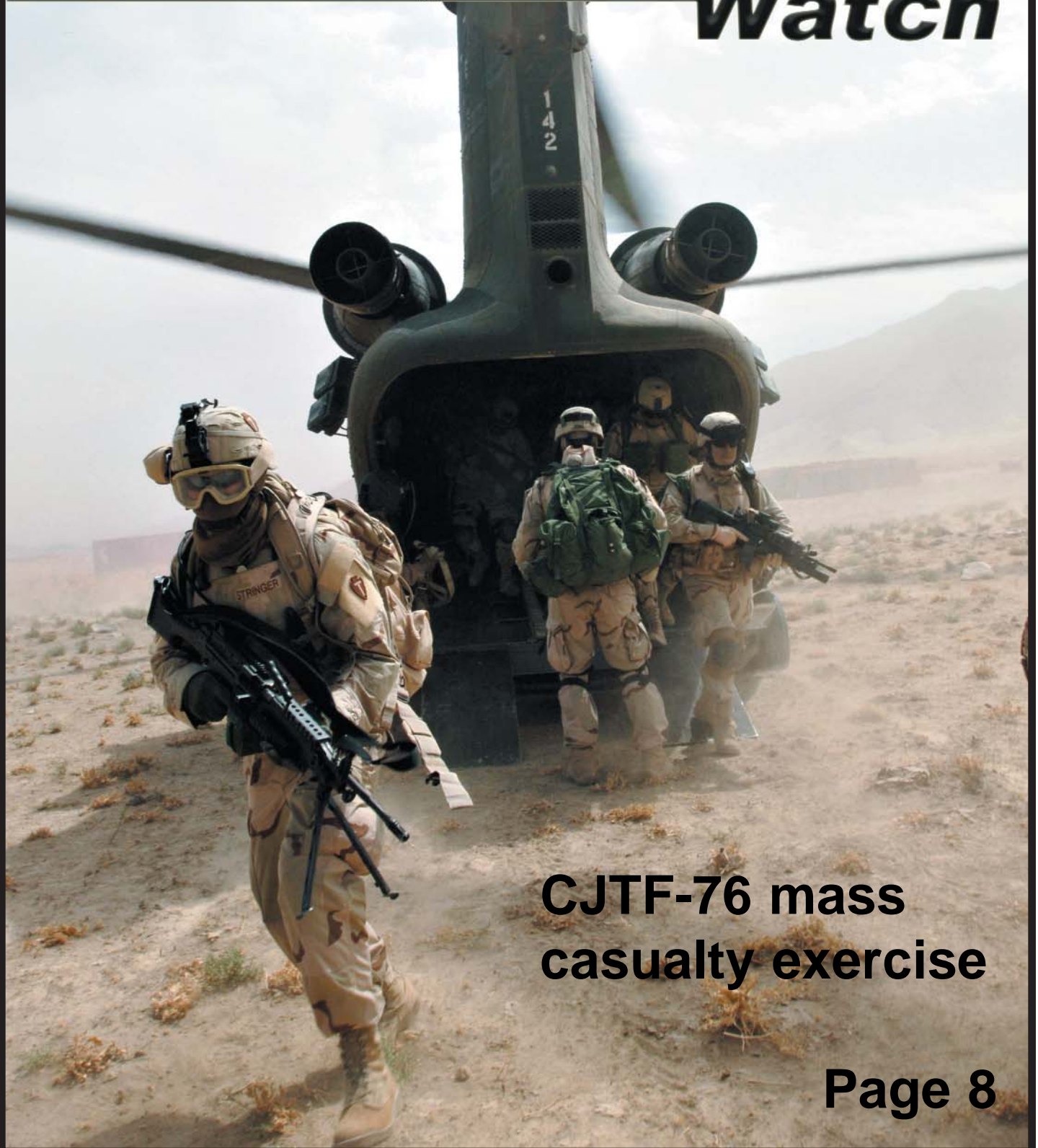


Afghanistan Freedom Watch

October 3, 2005

Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan



**CJTF-76 mass
casualty exercise**

Page 8



Under the instruction of Army Sgt. Craig Powers, an Afghan National Policeman demonstrates the arm-bar technique on Army Spc. Dylan O'Sullivan Sept. 3 at the Lash Kar Gah Provincial Reconstruction Team compound. Powers and O'Sullivan are members of the 92nd Military Police Company currently conducting training with the ANP.

Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Jacob Caldwell
Task Force Bayonet Public Affairs

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Cover: Soldiers from A Company, 3rd Battalion, 141st Infantry Regiment, disembark a CH-47 Chinook at the scene of a simulated vehicle-borne improvised explosive detonation.

Photo by Sgt. Matthew MacRoberts
20th Public Affairs Detachment



Afghanistan **Freedom** Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan **Watch**

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Public Affairs Officer - Col. James R. Yonts

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Winning hearts and minds

By Senior Master Sgt. Ty Foster

Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan Public Affairs

Working 12 to 13 hour days, six to seven days a week in a deployed environment takes a toll on one's spirit.

Sure, morale calls to and from home help. E-mails from friends and family perk the spirits up, too.

But, for me and many others, the bazaar is the highlight of my week. Much like a flea market in the states, local craftsmen of all ages cram into a small lot to sell their wares.

Their wares are plentiful -- carved coral, turquoise, lapis lazuli jewelry, gems, wood carvings, antique weapons, silk scarves, leather and fur goods, Afghan rugs, sterling silver jewelry and boxes and art.

I am an artist, so I'm drawn to other people's work. The first time I went to the bazaar here at Camp Eggers, Kabul, Afghanistan, I noticed one of the vendors had dozens of watercolor, oil and pencil portraits. I stopped to browse, expecting to meet a middle-aged man -- the artist. A young man stepped forward. He offered his hand and introduced himself.

"My name is Qahar Behzadio," he said in slightly accented English. "I am 12 years old. Would you like to see my pictures?"

As I looked through portraits of Afghan scenes, people and culture, he told me he has had no formal schooling as an artist. Only a 7th grade student, Qahar has developed his techniques by reading books and painting -- copious painting.

In his short life, he has drawn and painted more than 800 portraits. Afghan President Hamid Karzai himself has one of Qahar's portraits

I, by comparison, have completed maybe 250.

He is a gracious person. His toothy smile comes easily to his face. Eager to please, he shows anyone interested -- maybe even a few who are not -- the dozens of paintings he's brought for sale.

Nearly all of them are 18-inches by 24 inches, all are very well done.

I asked him, "How much?"

Oil paintings are the most expensive at \$40, followed by watercolors at \$30 and pencil portraits at \$20. With any of the other vendors at the bazaar, it is customary -- even required -- to haggle for the price that will "make you happy," as they say.

I would not haggle with Qahar. His work is worth more than he charges.

And while the economy is growing here, it is still hard for the people here to make a living wage. Qahar's father runs a bookstore, but times, though getting better here, are difficult. His brother helps the family by selling silk scarves at the bazaar near Qahar's artwork. The money the boys make puts food on their family's table.

With his prolific painting pace, one problem Qahar runs into is running out of supplies. Normally, he gets supplies from Pakistan. That takes time, so sometimes he runs out.

As a fellow artist, I always have supplies at home, so I asked my wife, Jan, to send some of my paints and brushes. She did, and I received them earlier this week.

Today, I gave Qahar acrylic paints, brushes and Gesso. Some of my family and friends are sending other art supplies for Qahar as well.

For me, it is the least I can do for a young Afghan boy I feel a kindred spirit with.

He dreams of going to America to study art some day. He dreams of opportunity. He doesn't wait with a hand out. He works for his family's living. I can only pray that the work Coalition forces are doing here -- building schools, roads, mosques, hospitals, jobs -- continues to give Afghan men, women and children hope and opportunity.

And let a young artist live out his dream.



PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD

An Air Force C-130 Hercules flies low over a Humvee manned by soldiers of the New Zealand Security Platoon of the New Zealand Provincial Reconstruction Team, at Bamyan Airfield on Aug. 30.

*Photo by New Zealand Army Staff Sgt. Tim Rowe
New Zealand Provincial Reconstruction Team*

If you have high-quality photos of service members supporting the Coalition mission or enjoying well-deserved off-duty time, please e-mail them to freedomwatch@baf.afgn.army.mil. Please include full identification and caption information, including who is in the photo and what action is taking place.

Forces destroy IED materials

By Army Sgt. Tara Teel
Combined Joint Task Force - 76

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan - Afghan and Coalition forces operating in eastern Afghanistan found and destroyed seven improvised explosive devices and two weapons caches in Khowst, Ghazni, Paktika and Nangahar provinces Sept. 15 and 16.

After receiving tips from

Afghan citizens, Afghan National Army, Afghan National Police and Coalition forces found the caches, consisting of numerous mines, small-arms ammunition and communication equipment.

Afghan intelligence services also conducted a raid on a suspected enemy compound in Khowst Province. They detained three suspected enemy as a result of the raid.

The three suspects, believed to be an IED cell responsible for numerous attacks in Khost, are being held by the ANP.

"The effectiveness and determination of the Afghan forces and Afghan citizens is proven through the discovery of these planned attacks," said Army Col. Patrick Donahue, commanding officer, Regional Command East. "It is great to see Afghans working with their

police forces. It shows their trust and confidence in Afghan forces. This is a team effort, and all security forces are being proactive to ensure the Sept. 18 election is a success.

"The Afghan people are determined to hold their first ever parliamentary elections and will not allow the use of IEDs and other terrorist attacks to deter them from achieving this goal," he said.

Marathoner runs to honor SEALS

By Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class
Michael Cokos
Fleet Public Affairs Center Atlantic

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. - Lieutenant j.g. Geoff Weber, assigned to Naval Amphibious Base Little Creek, Va., ran non-stop Sept. 4 and 5 for 102 miles at the oceanfront boardwalk here to raise money for the Naval Special Warfare Foundation.

Shortly after the United States lost 11 Navy SEALs in Afghanistan in June, Weber began searching for a way to honor those men and their families. His decision was to run continuously for 24 hours to

raise money for the families of fallen Navy Special Warfare commandos.

During the Labor Day weekend an exhausted but proud Weber finished a 102-mile run which, according to the NSWF, raised more than \$3,000, with donations still coming in and several thousand from Weber's sponsors.

Weber began the run with his wife at the Virginia Beach Rock 'n' Roll half marathon, which started near the Virginia Beach Convention Center. Once he finished that run, Weber said goodbye to his wife and continued running toward another section of the oceanfront board-

walk about a mile away. From this new starting point, Weber ran a mile back and forth -- 19 blocks -- for 24 hours.

"I've always wanted to do something for the NSWF," Weber said. "I've never before run non-stop for 24 hours."

According to Weber, he had much support on the sidelines, and he stopped running only to fill up on water and for a brief interview with a local news station. Donations came in via cash on the sidelines, by phone and Internet.

The morning of Sept. 5, Weber

See Runner, page 13

Dari/Pashtu phrase of the week



Afghan cultural tidbit

Dari/Pashtu phrase of the week:

Happy Ramadan

Dari

Mahe-Ramadan-e-tan Mubarak

(Mah- hey Rom-eh-don-eh-than Moo-bah-rack)

Pashtu

Ramadan mu Mubarak Sha

(Rom-eh-don moo Moo-bah-rack Shah)

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Muslim calendar. It is during this month that Muslims observe the Fast of Ramadan. Lasting for the entire month, Muslims fast during the daylight hours and in the evening eat small meals and visit with friends and family. Traditionally, it is a time of worship and contemplation, and a time to strengthen family and community ties.

U.S. Soldier wounded, four enemy killed

By Army Sgt. Tara Teel
Combined Joint Task Force - 76

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan - A U.S. service member was injured when a joint Afghan National Army-Coalition forces patrol was struck with an improvised explosive device south of Tarin Kowt in Kandahar Province Sept. 14. The ensuing firefight left four enemy dead.

According to a Combined Joint Task Force - 76 official the injured U.S. service member was evacuated to Kandahar Airfield for treatment and is in stable condition.

The Afghan-Coalition patrol was struck while they were conducting a joint offensive operation in the area.

Members of the patrol reported the IED strike was accompanied by small arms and rocket-propelled grenade fire from an unknown number of enemy.

The patrol pursued the attackers after they retreated and five enemy were detained in a village near the IED site.

Coalition attack planes provided air support to the troops on the ground and AH-64 Apache helicopters provided cover for the medical evacuation of the injured service member.

The joint patrol reported that the detained enemy had grenades and machine-gun ammunition in their possession.

They were taken into Coalition custody for questioning. All items recovered from the enemy will be destroyed.

In other offensive operations around Afghanistan, Afghan Security Forces discovered an IED southeast of Qalat, in Zabul Province, on a road being built to connect Shinkay to Qalat Sept. 14. Explosive ordnance personnel from 2nd Battalion, 503rd Parachute Infantry Regiment destroyed the pressure-plated IED in place.

Field reports listed that in a separate incident near Qalat, two individuals were detained for possessing IED-making material.

Again Soldiers from 2-503rd recovered explosives, money, electronics, wire, wire cutters and Afghan National Police identification cards. They are currently in the custody of 2-503rd at their forward operating base near Qalat.

In operations aimed at disrupting enemy activity in Eastern Afghanistan, 1st Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment detained three enemies Wed. who were suspected of manufacturing bombs near Gardez in Nangarhar Province.

A current detainee had divulged their operation and location. They are being questioned in the custody of the National Directorate for Security in Gardez.

Afghan explosive ordnance personnel detonated an IED discovered on a road near a Joint Election Management Bureau compound in the northern Wardak Province Wed.

Soldiers with 1-325th discovered the IED and cordoned off the area. There were no injuries or damage reported.

Enduring Voices

How will the elections change Afghanistan?



Army Staff Sgt. John Wattenberg Scott, Army Field Support Battalion

"Let's hope it will change for the better and give them more freedom like in the states."



German Army Sgt. Major Mattheyas Weix, German Liaison Office of the Coalition

"I hope that the results will be accepted by everyone, but I think the elections will have very little effect and things will stay the same."



Azim, Afghan contractor, Bagram Airfield

"This will bring more freedom to my country."



Army Pfc. Jessica Taggart, A Co. 165th Military Intelligence

"I think it will legitimize the new government as the tribal people start to build a world democracy."



Photo by Army Pfc. Vincent Fusco

Army 1st Lt. Rene Martinez, a base operations officer with the 111th Area Support Group, Texas Army National Guard, passes out toys to children during a civic assistance mission at the barracks outside Kandahar Airfield Sept. 5.

Force protection delivers civic assistance

By Army Pfc. Vincent Fusco
20th Public Affairs Detachment

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan - Back-to-school shopping for students at Kandahar Airfield could not be simpler. Army Sgt. 1st Class Jarrod Gozy delivered toys, school supplies and a backpack for every student on the first day of school Sept. 5.

Gozy, of the 173rd Support Battalion, is an ordained deacon at the Cameron Baptist Church, Cameron, N.C., whose organization, "Give Children a Chance," raises money to donate locally purchased materials to schoolchildren here.

"The reason I focus on children is they grow up with the same mentality their parents have," said Gozy. "The only way to change that mentality is to show them they have self-worth and people outside their village actually care about them."

Gozy started doing these missions in September of 1994 while passing candy and toys out to children in Haiti. This was Gozy's first major civic assistance mission in Afghanistan.

To make the project happen, Gozy talked with the school headmaster and

discussed what kind of supplies the school needed.

After deciding what he wanted to do, Gozy bought beef jerky with his own money and sold it to Coalition troops, civilian contractors and the fire department. He raised \$3,500 for the school.

With that money, he purchased 90 percent of the supplies from local vendors.

Additional assistance for the mission came from Army 1st Lt. John Boone, a Lexington, Ky., native and the G-2 mentor for the Afghan National Army's 205th Corps.

"Lt. Boone saw the flyer for the jerky and asked if there was anything he could do," said Gozy. Boone provided force protection with ANA and U.S. Army Soldiers.

"All we did was make sure [Gozy] had help with the distribution," said Boone. "We had the assets available to go over there and do the right thing and help them out."

"Anytime you have a large gathering with Soldiers and kids, you're a target for attacks," said Gozy. "Anytime you support a school, you become a target."

Having the security in place, the distri-

bution went smoothly, said Boone.

When they spoke earlier, the headmaster told Gozy he had 400 students, but only 270 children were available when Gozy's team passed everything out, said Gozy. The left over supplies were donated to another school in Kandahar City.

Each backpack contained two notebooks, two pencils and pens, two erasers, a pencil box and sharpener, and a pack of colored pencils, said Gozy. There were different kinds of bags available for boys and girls of all school ages.

In addition, supplies were donated to the 23 teachers and all 12 classrooms received whiteboards and markers.

"Educating the young people of a country is going to ensure good things for the country," said Boone. "The missions help to support Afghanistan's future and make sure young people are prepared to take control of the country."

Gozy hopes to turn his humanitarian missions into something bigger.

"The only way to change the future is to take care of the kids," said Gozy. "A lot of people don't do this for recognition. They do it because it's the good and right thing to do."



Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Ken Denny

Candidates wait onstage for the crowd to enter the auditorium in Golbahar in the Kapisa Province Sept. 15. The Shura was held to give voters a chance to meet with and ask questions of candidates competing for 12 provincial council seats and four Wolesi Jirga seats.

Voters meet candidates in historic shura

By Army Staff Sgt.
Ken Denny
117th Mobile Public Affairs
Detachment

KAPISA PROVINCE, Afghanistan - Voters in Kapisa Province were given the opportunity to meet and listen to the issues of each political candidate competing for a seat in the Sept. 18 elections during a Shura Sept. 15. "In the future, many of these candidates will be making decisions for our government," said Afghan Satan Murad, governor of Kapisa Province.

More than 1,000 people crowded into a refurbished cinema, while many more stood outside, to see and lis-

ten to more than 100 candidates as they answered questions concerning their election platforms.

According to Murad, 350 of the most influential people were chosen to ask questions of the candidates.

"This is a chance for the people of Kapisa Province to see their candidates and hear what programs they are planning for the freedom of Afghanistan," said Murad.

"The people of Kapisa Province are highly educated and will make wise choices in the elections," he said.

Exactly 106 candidates were seeking 12 provincial council seats and four Wolesi Jirga, or National Assembly, seats representing the province.

According to Murad, the event was "organized at the request of the people."

Murad, who graduated from Slippery Rock University in Pennsylvania and fought against the Soviets and the Taliban, said that security has been an issue during the weeks leading up to the election.

"The Taliban are unable to disrupt the process in the province," he said. "The U.S., Coalition and the (Afghan Security Forces) have taken a number of precautions to control the roads and entrances to the polling sites and help us out in planning."

The province has been quiet leading up to the elections with only one incident report-

ed to Murad about an Afghan National Police post that was attacked by Taliban, he said. The attack was repelled by the police.

As far as the political process goes, there is strife as well as compromise. During a break in the Shura, several men became involved in an argument concerning a candidate who was accused of being Taliban, but the incident was soon quelled by the ANP and the political process began again.

"This is the first time to cast a vote for freedom and democracy," said Murad.

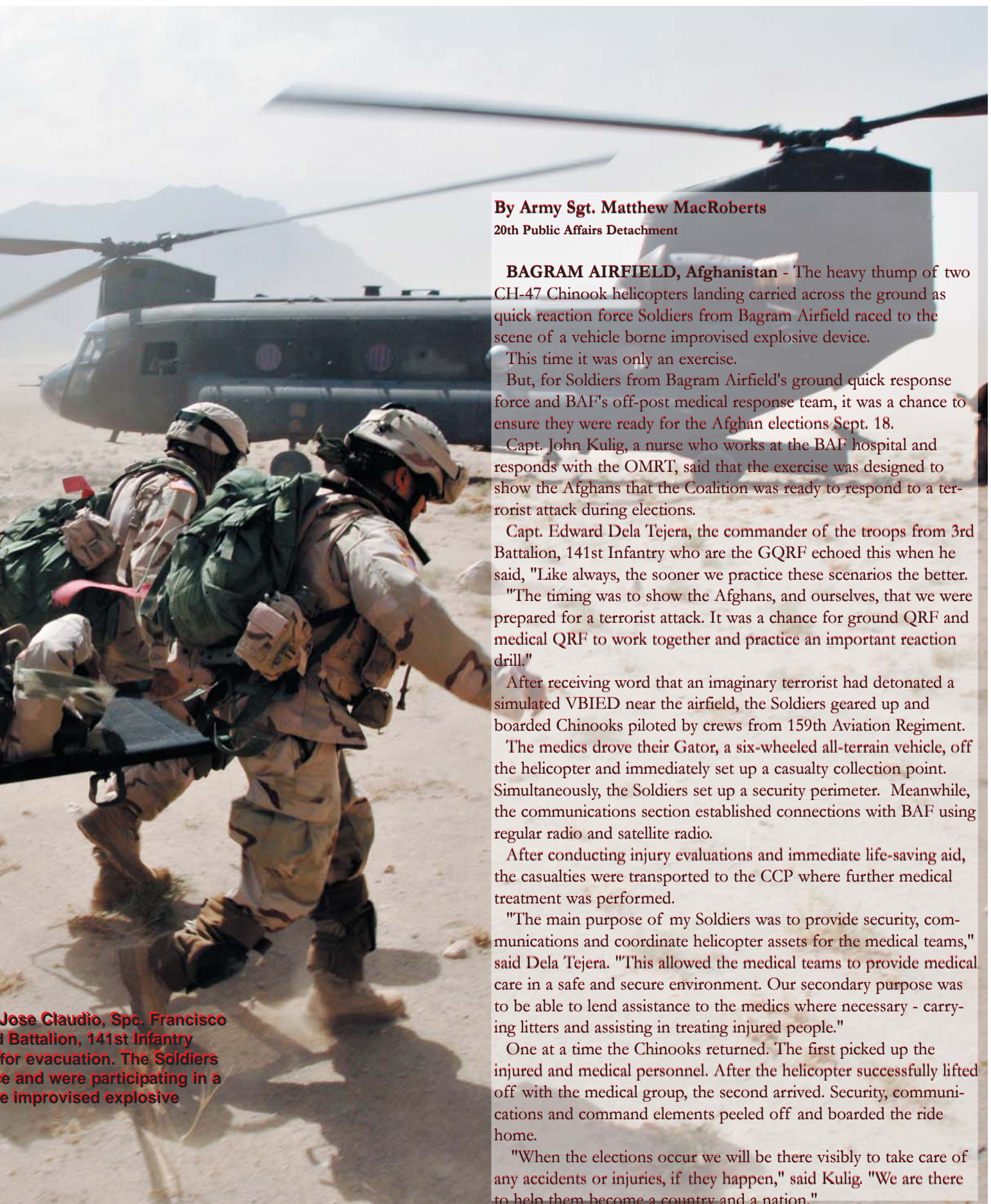
"The first time a Shura has been held to question candidates. The first of its kind to find out who is better."

Preparing for the worst

Combined Joint Task Force-76 Quick Reaction Force practice for worse case scenario



(From left to right) Staff Sgt. Angel Martinez, Sgt. Ortiz and Spc. Joe Martinez, from A Company, 3rd Brigade, carry a litter patient to a CH-47 Chinook as part of a mass casualty exercise simulating a vehicle born device. Photo by Army Sgt. Matthew MacRoberts.



By Army Sgt. Matthew MacRoberts

20th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan - The heavy thump of two CH-47 Chinook helicopters landing carried across the ground as quick reaction force Soldiers from Bagram Airfield raced to the scene of a vehicle borne improvised explosive device.

This time it was only an exercise.

But, for Soldiers from Bagram Airfield's ground quick response force and BAF's off-post medical response team, it was a chance to ensure they were ready for the Afghan elections Sept. 18.

Capt. John Kulig, a nurse who works at the BAF hospital and responds with the OMRT, said that the exercise was designed to show the Afghans that the Coalition was ready to respond to a terrorist attack during elections.

Capt. Edward Dela Tejera, the commander of the troops from 3rd Battalion, 141st Infantry who are the GQRF echoed this when he said, "Like always, the sooner we practice these scenarios the better.

"The timing was to show the Afghans, and ourselves, that we were prepared for a terrorist attack. It was a chance for ground QRF and medical QRF to work together and practice an important reaction drill."

After receiving word that an imaginary terrorist had detonated a simulated VBIED near the airfield, the Soldiers geared up and boarded Chinooks piloted by crews from 159th Aviation Regiment.

The medics drove their Gator, a six-wheeled all-terrain vehicle, off the helicopter and immediately set up a casualty collection point. Simultaneously, the Soldiers set up a security perimeter. Meanwhile, the communications section established connections with BAF using regular radio and satellite radio.

After conducting injury evaluations and immediate life-saving aid, the casualties were transported to the CCP where further medical treatment was performed.

"The main purpose of my Soldiers was to provide security, communications and coordinate helicopter assets for the medical teams," said Dela Tejera. "This allowed the medical teams to provide medical care in a safe and secure environment. Our secondary purpose was to be able to lend assistance to the medics where necessary - carrying litters and assisting in treating injured people."

One at a time the Chinooks returned. The first picked up the injured and medical personnel. After the helicopter successfully lifted off with the medical group, the second arrived. Security, communications and command elements peeled off and boarded the ride home.

"When the elections occur we will be there visibly to take care of any accidents or injuries, if they happen," said Kulig. "We are there to help them become a country and a nation."

Jose Claudio, Spc. Francisco
1 Battalion, 141st Infantry
for evacuation. The Soldiers
and were participating in a
the improvised explosive



Photos by Army Sgt. Matthew MacRoberts, 2A0th Public Affairs Detachment

Army medic Pfc. Juan Rosales, A Company, 3rd Battalion, 141st Infantry Regiment, evaluates a casualty before moving the Soldier to a casualty collection point.



Army Pfc. Jose Hernandez (left) and Francisco Mendoza, A Co., 3-141st, lift a litter patient from a Gator at the casualty collection point.



Soldiers from A Company, 3-141st, disembark a CH-47 Chinook at the scene of a simulated vehicle-borne improvised explosive detonation.



Army Pfc. James Hough pulls security during a mass casualty exercise Sept. 8



Photo by Army Sgt. 1st Class Stephen Lum

Afghan National Army engineers cut drainage ditches for the Tarin Kowt Road in Uruzgan Province.

ANA help in road building

By Army Sgt. 1st Class Stephen Lum
117th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

TARIN KOWT, URUZGAN

PROVINCE, Afghanistan - Back home, away from the war, it was Labor Day holiday, but here in Afghanistan, it was another day of labor, especially for the newly trained platoon of Afghan National Army engineers working on the Tarin Kowt Road.

Afghan soldiers, doing their share to rebuild their country, were visited by Brig. Gen. Chopan, the chief of staff of the 205th ANA Corps, located outside Kandahar Airfield.

Lt. Col. Paul Paolozzi, an Ithaca, N.Y., resident, and commander of Task Force Pacemaker and 864th Engineer Combat Battalion (Heavy), took Chopan on a tour of the project and the coordinated work between the Afghan and U.S. Soldiers.

Chopan, saw first hand, how adept his soldiers from the Support Platoon, Engineer Company, 4th Kandak, 1st Brigade, 205th Corps, are at heavy equipment road work. After a few days of intensive operation and maintenance training from TF Pacemaker's Spc. Patrick Brock, they began the practical application of their newly acquired skills.

Embedded tactical trainers, Maj. Blake Settle, Derek Flaughter and 1st Sgt. Danny Holleran, from the 4th Battalion,

1st Brigade, 205th Regional Command Assistance Group from Kandahar, Afghanistan, acted as the conduit. They made this project of empowering the ANA a part of the rebuilding of their nation.

"It actually was the idea of the TF Pacemaker commander," said Flaughter, a Hospice manager from Mays Lick, Ky. "We heard that he was interested in working with the ANA engineers and we drove over to their headquarters to coordinate the mission. We saw this as a great training opportunity and jumped at the chance."

"After convincing the Coalition command that we could make this worthwhile project happen, we began the coordination of getting trainers and equipment for the ANA engineers," said Settle, an antique dealer from Louisville, Ky. "My previous tour here gave me an advantage of knowing who talk to and where to go to get results."

"We were lucky to find a dedicated and knowledgeable engineer in Spc. Brock," added Flaughter. "He not only taught the Afghan soldiers the fine points of maneuvering the multi-armed machinery like the grader, but the importance of inspecting and maintaining equipment before and after its use."

Additionally, Brock, who calls Fort Lewis, Wash., home, taught them how to

load and secure the heavy equipment on low boys (equipment trailers). Finally, he provided instruction on proper hand signals to coordinate the movement and safe direction of personnel and equipment.

"We were impressed with the young ANA platoon sergeant and his soldiers who cut over 13 kilometers of road in the past two weeks," said Holleran, a postal carrier from Brooksville, Ky., and project noncommissioned officer in charge.

"The platoon sergeant motivated his soldiers to take pride in their work. In days, they were operating bulldozers, graders, scrapers, rollers, and rippers (rock remover) like old pros."

While at the site, the general observed his soldiers cutting culverts on the side of the road that would provide flood drainage. He congratulated them for their diligence and encouraged them to continue to serve their nation.

"These ANA engineers are making history," said Paolozzi, of the Fort Lewis-based 864th Engineers. "They are the first ANA road crew. They're sowing seeds of cooperation and victory. We engineers throughout the world are the same."

We may wear different uniforms or speak different languages, but we all know our building mission encompasses hours of hard, dirty, tireless work."



Photo by Marine Sgt. Robert Storm

(Clockwise from left) Marine Sgts. Jeremy D. Sadler, Alexander Papiernik, Cpl. Andrew P. Parsons and Lance Cpl. Michael D. Hargis; tactical data networking specialists with the 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment communications.

‘Geek squad’ the future of modern warfare

By Marine Sgt. Robert Storm
2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment
Public Affairs

JALALABAD, Afghanistan - "We are cyber-warriors; we are the future of the modern battlefield," said a laughing Marine Sgt. Alexander Papiernik, a tactical data networking specialist, from Mineral Ridge, Ohio, when speaking of the Marines in the 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment communications shop.

The Marines, affectionately known as the "geek squad," are responsible for installing, operating and maintaining network systems.

Tactical data network specialist responsibilities include installing and configuring hubs, routers, bridges and other transmission mediums. They also install and configure server hardware and software.

Many times they are called upon to install, optimize and troubleshoot local area and wide area networks, and operate the tactical data network server.

"We do everything from e-mail to live video feed from aircraft. We can deliver a real-time, instantaneous feed to anywhere

in the world," said Papiernik. "How many computer nerds do you know that have a grenade launcher? Bill Gates doesn't."

TDN specialists not only ensure the data communications for the battalion are kept running, they also help out fellow Marines with their own computer problems. Since it would take six weeks for a computer to make a round trip to the states to be repaired, TDN specialists are considered invaluable to the Marines that e-mail friends and family back home.

"We get two or three fix-it jobs a week. Our biggest grief is when they try to fix it themselves. When that happens, it just makes it harder on us. Marines need to bring it to us as soon as there is a problem," said Cpl. Andrew P. Parsons, tactical data networking specialist, from Winchester, Va.

The Marines execute the data plan for the battalion under the supervision of network administrator Marine Sgt. Jeremy D. Sadler, network administrator, from Newark, Del.

Linking of the forward operating bases with secure communications is crucial to

the success of the battalion in its mission, said Sadler. The use of up-to-date technology makes the range of the battalion significantly greater.

"Security and stability are the main concerns for our job. Thankfully, with (Navy Marine Corps Intranet) we're a step closer than ever before. Now, all units will be on the same system," said Sadler.

Besides keeping the battalion in constant communication for military applications, the TDN specialists are also an important factor in morale, as they maintain the Internet allowing Marines easy contact with their families and friends.

"When I came in the Marine Corps, we had to write letters, and you had to pay for your own stamp. Now I have Marines that can chat with their wives and even use web (cameras)," said Marine Master Gunnery Sgt. Gerardo V. Panetta, battalion operations chief. "These guys are amazing. Without Marines like Papiernik and Parsons we would be in a hurt locker. We usually have at least one computer go down a day, and we just bring it to them and they get it right back up."

Colonel's training saved his life

By Air Force Capt.

David W. Small

U.S. Central Command Air
Forward Public Affairs

SOUTHWEST ASIA - A colonel at this forward-deployed location credits his survival from a terrorist attack to his military training, and he is now passing that training on to others.

More than a year after Air Force Lt. Col. Ed O'Neal redeployed from Saudi Arabia, where he was shot five times in a vicious terrorist attack, he is back in theater.

While at this location, he is sharing his life experiences with other Airmen and teaches them tactics and techniques for survival.

O'Neal, the U.S. Central Command Air Forces Forward director of manpower and personnel, acknowledges a single training course he took 12 years ago as the reason he is alive, and his devotion to duty as the reason he is deployed again, despite some apprehensions.

In preparation for a deployment to Africa as a United Nations observer in 1992, then-Captain O'Neal went to a terrorism awareness training

course at Fort Bragg, N.C. There he learned to be familiar with his surroundings, practice good security, make himself a hard target and maintain vigilance.

His instructors planted fake car bombs on students' cars and sent anonymous letters and packages to their hotels to train them in situational awareness.

Almost 12 years later, those lessons were put to the test in Dhahran when O'Neal was tipped off to an impending terrorist attack. He and a few others managed to barricade themselves on the roof of a nearby building while a 12-hour battle raged below between the terrorists and Saudi security forces. Ricocheting bullets struck O'Neal in five places. His wounds were not life threatening, but 22 people died in the attack.

"I'm here today because of what I learned in that course," he said. "You'll use whatever you learn -- you just don't know when you'll use it.

You've got to be prepared. When the time comes, you can't say you need a 're-do' on the class."

O'Neal said he was able to take the appropriate actions during the attack because of his attention to his training instructors. He hopes others realize how important that is.

"Your brain is the ultimate weapons system," he said. "Physical fitness and training determines your ability as a professional Airman."

Training builds confidence, he said.

"You'll be amazed at how you'll react when the time comes, and you need to react in the right way," he said. "Nothing you learn is wasted."

Before O'Neal was repatriated to Germany, one of the medics asked the imposing 6-foot-3-inch colonel incredulously, "We don't see many senior officers wounded, what's your job?"

He replied with a snicker, "I'm a personnel officer." When the medic asked what he was doing to get shot, he replied, "My job."

"They didn't ask me what was my (specialty) when they opened fire," he said. "Special operators are not the only Air Force combatants in this ubiquitous battlefield."

The colonel decided to

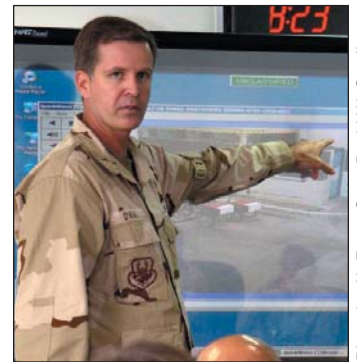


Photo by Air Force Capt. David W. Small

Air Force Lt. Col. Ed O'Neal briefs Airmen on tactics and techniques for survival at a forward-deployed location.

return to Saudi Arabia and complete the remaining 50 days of that deployment. He said it was painful to go back, but he was glad to have faced his fears.

"I knew I would stay in the Air Force and needed to complete that mission so I could continue to do my job with confidence," O'Neal said.

He went back, finishing his tour there July 21, 2004.

One year later, Colonel O'Neal arrived here for another yearlong deployment.

"There's going to be others like me who are going to have to come back here," he said. "Each person has to come to terms with what's happened to them."

From Runner, page 4

stopped running. His feet were blistered and his body ached, but he had the same spirit and devotion as he did earlier. Weber said as long as he could get in a day's rest, he would do it again in a heartbeat.

"I want to thank everyone who showed their support for my effort and for the NSWF," Weber said. "I'm gracious for that support and for the opportunity to give back something. It's easy to quit sometimes, but with people counting on you, you have no choice but to succeed."

Weber joined the Navy shortly after the

Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and recently relocated to NAB Little Creek after accepting orders for a support position with SEAL Team 8.

He earned the world record on the treadmill after running 30.1 miles in 3:46:12. The Lenox, Mass., native was on the Navy Marathon team in 2003 and has completed five 50-mile ultra-marathons.

According to Weber, this was a last-minute decision in terms of preparation. He did not have half the time to prepare for this that he usually allots for a marathon run, much less a run nearly four times the distance. He said his motivation

came from someplace else.

"God has blessed me with a wonderful wife, three beautiful children, a great career in the Navy, and the ability 'to run and not grow weary,'" he said. "This is the least I can do to support the families of those that are so vital to our national security."

The NSWF was formed in 2000. The Foundation's mission is to provide financial, educational and motivational support and to promote health and welfare programs for the Naval Special Warfare community as well as maintain the community's long-standing heritage.



Photos by Army Staff Sgt. Jacob Caldwell

An Afghan woman casts her election ballot at a girl's high school Sept. 18 in Lash Kar Gah, Helmand Province.

Election Day

By Army Staff Sgt. Jacob Caldwell
Task Force Bayonet Public Affairs

Afghans discover the power of the polls as 12.5 million registered Afghan voters took part in Afghanistan's first parliamentary elections Sept. 18. Women also had a historic day in the elections, as they made up 41 percent of the total voter turnout.



Photos by Army Staff Sgt. Jacob Caldwell

An Afghan man dips his finger in ink at a polling station in Lash Kar Gah, Helmand Province, Sept. 18. The ink shows that he has voted in the parliamentary elections and prevents voting fraud by preventing people from voting more than once.



An Afghan National Policeman checks voters before they enter a polling station in Lash Kar Gah Sept. 18. Security provided by the ANP was tight and included a curfew and traffic limitations on the eve of the elections.

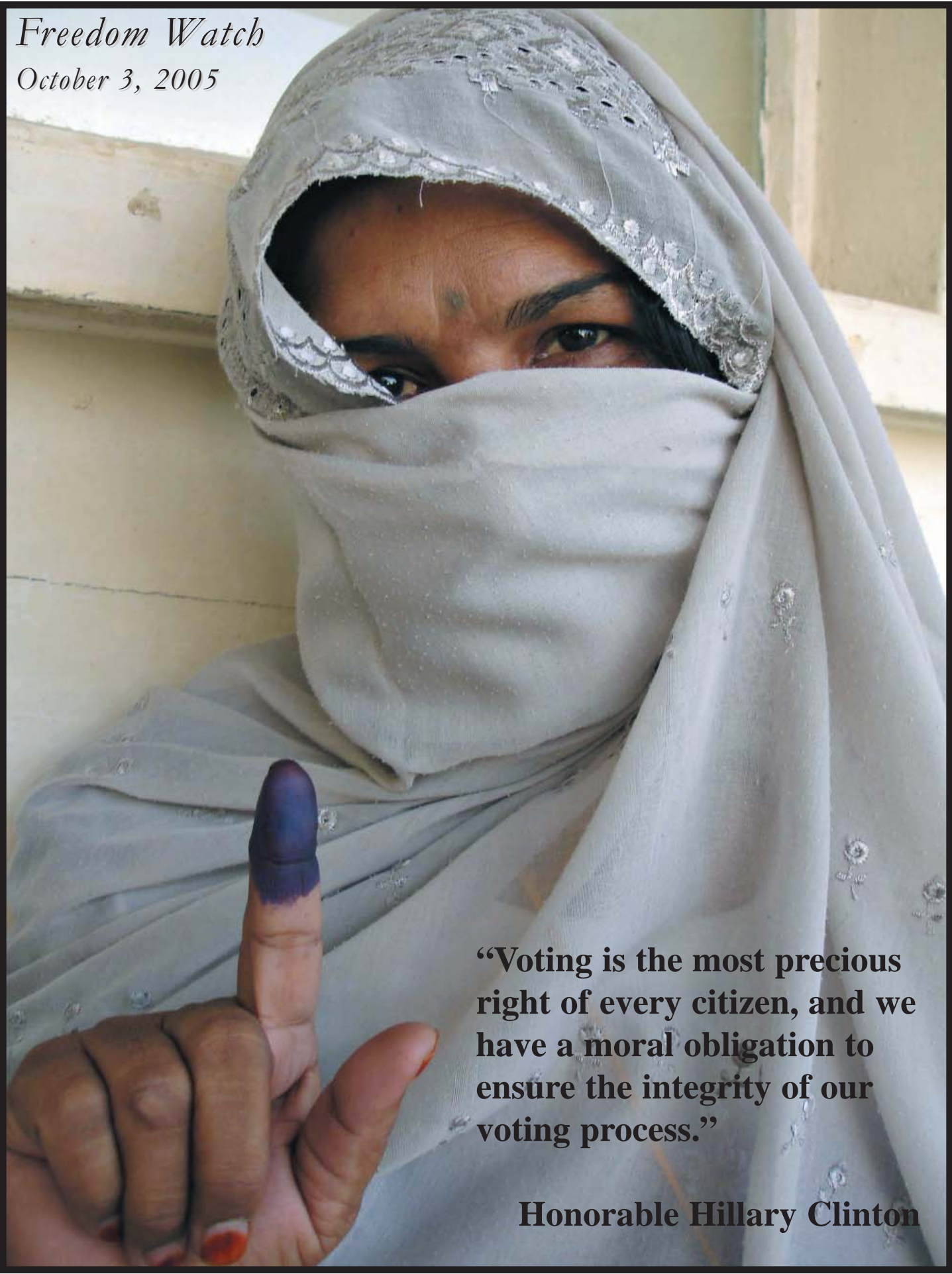


Afghan women proudly display their ink-stained fingers after casting ballots



Afghan men line up early in the morning outside a polling station in Lash Kar Gah Sept. 18 to cast their ballots in parliamentary elections. More than 12.5 millions Afghans registered to vote for the elections.

Freedom Watch
October 3, 2005



**“Voting is the most precious
right of every citizen, and we
have a moral obligation to
ensure the integrity of our
voting process.”**

Honorable Hillary Clinton